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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: JUNE 24, 2009

Summary: Reports of a "series of suspected U.S. missiles strikes in South Waziristan killing an important militant commander" dominated headlines in all newspapers on Wednesday. However, they also reported conflicting death toll figures attributed to air strikes. Newspapers also highlighted a report that "[Taliban leader] Baitullah's [Mehsud] rival militant was shot dead by one of his bodyguards in Dera Ismail Khan." Some major dailies reported that President Obama's National Security Advisor General James Jones would arrive in Pakistan today (Wednesday). Also underscored by all newspapers were reports that the "National Assembly Speaker has set up a much-awaited 27-member committee to revisit the controversial 17th Amendment" and other constitutional amendments to strengthen the parliamentary democracy. Ambassador Patterson's visit to Karachi on Tuesday garnered extensive media coverage. Several major dailies reported Ambassador Patterson's visit to new Secretariat of American Business Council, and her remarks that "U.S. investors are keen on Pakistan."

Most major dailies ran editorials on the implications of the recent murder of renegade militant commander Qari Zainuddin with special reference to the Pakistani government military operation in South Waziristan against chief Mehsud. The prestigious English language daily, "Dawn," observed that the "immediate result of the assassination is likely to be demoralization in the Qari Zainuddin camp." The populist, often sensational, national English daily "The News," noted that "for the present Baitullah has demonstrated his ruthlessness and proved why he remains a main target for the military. Until he is defeated there can be no peace in Waziristan or in Pakistan." Likewise, the liberal Urdu daily "Express," reiterated that "every such act will turn the Pakistani nation against them (militants)." End Summary.

News Stories

"Drones Hit Baitullah Hideouts, 80 Killed; First-Ever Attack On Militant Leader's Hometown" "The News" (06/24)

"About 80 people, including a senior commander of the Baitullah Mehsud-led militants, Khwaz Wali Mehsud, were killed and several others sustained injuries in two separate attacks by U.S. spy planes on a suspected militant hideout and funeral prayers at Lattaka village of Ladha tehsil in South Waziristan Agency on Tuesday, private TV channels reported.... A government official based at the nearby Razmak town in North Waziristan told 'The News' by phone that thick smoke billowing out of the spot could be seen from distant villages. There were reports that senior militant commanders,

including Baitullah Mahsud himself had arrived there to attend funeral of the slain militant commander Khwaz Ali. Some reports said dreaded militant commander and master-trainer of suicide bombers Qari Hussain and prominent Afghan Taliban commander Maulvi Sangeen were also killed in the missile attack."

"Drone Attacks To Affect Pak-U.S. Ties, Says Samsam" "The News" (06/24)

"Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Syed Samsam Ali Bokhari on Tuesday said that U.S. drone attacks on Pakistani soil would not only affect the country's anti-terrorism efforts but the Pak-U.S. relations as well. Talking to a private television channel the Minister said that these attacks are proving to be as counter-productive with regard to terrorism thus they are condemnable."

"Baitullah Rival Qari Zainuddin Shot Dead" "Dawn" (06/24)

"A militant factional leader opposed to the Tehrik-i-Taliban Chief, Baitullah Mehsud was killed by one of his bodyguards in Dera Ismail Khan on Tuesday. Qari Zainuddin's group immediately blamed the TTP Chief for orchestrating his murder and immediately appointed his brother as the new factional chief to continue their struggle against Baitullah Mehsud."

Obama's Top Security Advisor Arrives Today" "The Nation," "Daily Times" (06/24)

"U.S. President Barack Obama's top Security Advisor James Jones arrives in Islamabad today (Wednesday) on a two-day visit to discuss the Washington's anti-terrorism strategy with Pakistani leadership with focus on the ongoing military operations in Swat Valley and South Waziristan."

"27-Member Body To Review Constitution" "Dawn" (06/24)

"The Speaker of the National Assembly has set up a 27-Member committee to revisit the 1973 Constitution and weigh pros and cons of repealing the 17th Amendment. The body shall also propose measures to strike a balance between the powers of the President and the Prime Minister, including removal of clause 58(2)b which empowers the President to dissolve the National Assembly and dismiss an elected government."

"U.S. Investors Keen On Pakistan, Says Envoy" "Dawn" (06/24)

"In the first nine months of current fiscal year the U.S. investment has touched \$705 million with several multi-million dollars in the pipeline. This was stated by U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Anne W. Patterson, while speaking at the inauguration of the new Secretariat of American Business Council in Karachi. She said that U.S. was the single largest investor in Pakistan and she was encouraging other U.S. investors to grab investment opportunities in Pakistan. We also want to encourage Pakistanis living in the U.S. to invest in Pakistan, she added."

"U.S. Envoy Reaffirms Pledges To Build ROZs In FATA" "Business Recorder" (06/24)

"The U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Anne W. Patterson on Tuesday reaffirmed pledge to build the Reconstruction Opportunity Zones (ROZs) in the border areas of Pakistan to prevent people from turning into extremist through provision of employment. Speaking at the inauguration of the new Secretariat of American Business Council in Karachi, she said that the U.S. will initiate infrastructure development projects under ROZs, besides establishing manufacturing units there."

"Pakistan May Get Additional \$200 Million Aid" "The News" (06/24)

"U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan, Anne W. Patterson informed that an additional \$200 million aid assistance for Pakistan, was approved on Tuesday, while at the same time, the U.S. is also working on the \$1.5 billion annual financial assistance promised to the country for the next five years. She further said \$30 million had already been provided for the Internally Displaced persons (IDPs) earlier."

Patterson added that the U.S. was also ready to provide assistance to deal with the energy crisis of Pakistan. Addressing the media at the inauguration ceremony of the new American Business Council of Pakistan (ABC) office premises on Tuesday, she said that it was a challenge for the U.S. to expand their trade to developing countries when they themselves were facing critical times due to recession."

"U.S. To Push For Pak Economic Support At G-8 Meeting" "The Nation" (06/24)

"The United States will ask major industrialized nations to expand their economic support for Pakistan at this week's meeting of G-8 Foreign Ministers in Italy to help the South Asian anti-terror ally deal with the 'enormous humanitarian challenge' to provide relief to millions of displaced people. Undersecretary for Political Affairs William Burns will represent the U.S. at a series of meetings on Pakistan and Afghanistan in the Italian city of Trieste from June 25-26 in advance of the G-8 summit in July."

"Search, Sweep Operation In Swat Launched" "The News" (06/24)

"The security forces launched search and sweep operation on Tuesday in parts of the troubled Swat Valley as the Rah-e-Rast swoop against militants continued successfully, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said."

"Five Army Men Killed In Charbagh" "Dawn" (06/24)

"Five Army men, including a Major, a Captain, and three Jawans were martyred when a unit of Baloch Regiment was ambushed in Charbagh, Malakand division on Tuesday evening. According to ISPR, the party was returning after a search operation when the unfortunate incident took place at 7pm on Tuesday."

"Six Militants Killed In Lower Dir" "Dawn" (06/24)

"Six militants were killed on Tuesday in Shadas village of Maidan area in Lower Dir when gunship helicopters targeted the house of Miftahud Din alias Shabar, a local Taliban commander, official sources said."

"Maulana Shah Dauran Injured" "The News" (06/24)

"Maulana Shah Dauran, deputy leader of the Taliban in Swat, was reportedly seriously injured after a military operation against the militants on Tuesday. Official sources said he was among several militants hit during a military attack in the Kabal area of Swat."

"Militant Camp Holds Clues To Taliban Operations" "Dawn" (06/24)

"Deep in the tunnel, a small wooden cabinet is the only piece of furniture. A syringe still in its plastic wrapper and a disposable razor are scattered on the shelves. A pair of sky-blue trousers lies on the rocky ground by the remnants of a threadbare sleeping mat.

'This was their safest haven,' said Waseem Shafique, an Army Major whose men stumbled onto this cave and the militant camp around it this month. 'Nothing can touch them in here, it is safe from shelling, they cannot be seen -- everything.' The hillside camp offers rare insight into conditions, tools and tactics being used by militants against government troops in the picturesque Swat Valley for about two years."

"Five Militants Arrested" "Dawn" (06/24)

"The Karachi Police claimed on Tuesday to have arrested five members of the banned Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The men were allegedly involved in generating funds for the TTP, mainly through robberies and kidnapping for ransom, police officials said."

"Pakistani Assault Hurting Taliban: U.S. Officer" "Dawn" (06/24)

"The Pakistan military's offensive against the Taliban has cut insurgent attacks across the border in eastern Afghanistan, depriving them of a cheap supply of arms, a senior U.S. officer said on Tuesday. 'I think there's a definite impact,' U.S. Colonel John Spiszer, commander of a brigade combat team in northeast Afghanistan, told reporters. As a result of Pakistani operations

against Taliban militants in Bajaur and other areas near the Afghan border, Col. Spiszer said: 'The activity in this area has declined. And not just declined, weapons are drying up, money's drying up.'

"India Not A Military Threat: Zardari" "The News" (06/24)

"In an interview with Euro News, President Asif Ali Zardari has said that he does not consider India as a military threat to Pakistan but the Taliban are international threat to the world."

"Pakistan's Envoy Meets Indian Foreign Secretary Menon" "Dawn" (06/24)

"Shahid Malik, Pakistan's High Commissioner in New Delhi, called on Indian Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon on Tuesday to set a date for talks between the foreign secretaries of the two countries. According to sources, the officials were not able to set a date for a meeting to resume the composite dialogue process, but India sought more cooperation from Pakistan for apprehending suspects in the Mumbai attacks."

"Obama Cautious In Condemning Iran" "Dawn" (06/24)

"U.S. President Barack Obama on Tuesday condemned the Iranian crackdown against demonstrations, but resisted calls to make a policy statement on how he plans to deal with the situation. 'We will monitor the situation and see how it plays itself out before making any judgment about how to proceed,' said the U.S. president when pressed at a White House news conference to spell out a plan for dealing with Iran."

"Iran Rules Out Scrapping Vote As World Alarm Mounts" "Dawn" (06/24)

"Iran ruled out cancelling the disputed presidential vote on Tuesday, issuing a new warning to the leader of the opposition and lashing out at UN 'meddling' as it battles the most serious challenge to the Islamic regime in 30 years. As international alarm over the crisis mounted, Britain said it was expelling two Iranian diplomats after a similar move by Tehran while other European nations hauled in envoys to protest at the election and the repression of the opposition protests. But the top election watchdog, the Guardians Council, insisted the vote would stand."

Editorials/Op-eds

"Waziristan Uncertainty," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (06/24)

"The immediate result of the assassination is likely to be demoralization in the Qari Zainuddin camp.... The truth is though little is known about what exactly is going on in South Waziristan Agency, who is fighting whom and why, and what is likely to happen in the days and weeks ahead. What is clear so far is that the security forces are squeezing Baitullah Mehsud's strongholds by cutting off the three main routes that lead to them and pounding targets from the air. Reports suggest several militants from the Baitullah camp have been killed so far, but this has not been verified independently. Meanwhile, drones continue to strike targets in South Waziristan Agency, but once again it has not been possible to independently verify who has been killed."

"Another Murder," an editorial in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (06/24)

"The death of Qari Zainuddin will deter others from following his path. The murder is obviously a setback for the government; some would say a severe one. The Zainuddin rebellion had been intended both to create a sense within Waziristan that Baitullah's days could be numbered and to assist in the difficult task of penetrating into Waziristan.... In the increasingly vicious power struggle on in Waziristan, the latest murder will go to strengthen Baitullah and to prove he remains the main force in Waziristan. This of course is dangerous. It has become clear that Waziristan is the epicenter of militancy. It also acts as the main link between Pakistan and

Afghanistan. Till we re-gain control of that territory we cannot claim to have won the war on terrorism. For the present Baitullah has demonstrated his ruthlessness and proved why he remains a main target for the military. Until he (Baitullah) is defeated there can be no peace in Waziristan or in Pakistan."

"Qari Zainuddin's Murder: It Is Imperative To Eliminate Terrorists" an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (06/24)

"Through this latest incident of killing [Zainuddin, Baitullah Mehsud's rival] a message has been given that any voice raised against the militants will be silenced forever. However, one thing the militants are overlooking in this entire situation is that every such act will turn the Pakistani nation against them; and the militants will not be able to frighten the people like this."

"Baitullah Mehsud And America," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (06/24)

"One big diversion from the truth is the 'discovery' that Baitullah Mehsud, the leader of the TTP, is an agent of the United States and India wreaking havoc in Pakistan to fulfill the U.S. design to establish the hegemony of India in South Asia and to facilitate the elimination by the U.S. of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. Who has proof of all this? Who inside the government has spread this 'information' without giving sufficient proof?... Foreign commentators now ask: If you hate the U.S. so much and know that it is helping the Taliban to create chaos in Pakistan as a prelude to grabbing your nuclear weapons, why do you go asking Washington for money? They also say: If India is destroying Pakistan through the Taliban why are you seeking a 'composite' dialogue with it instead of going to war with it?"

"Desperate Militants," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (06/24)

"The signs of desperation on the part of the Taliban are obvious. One example of which is the killing of Qari Zainuddin - a militant commander who had recently given statements opposing Baitullah Mehsud.... Under the dedicated and professional command of the Pakistan army, the military is once again set to apply force to capture or kill militants, especially Baitullah Mehsud, who is accused of harboring foreign troops on the Pakistani soil.... South Waziristan is believed to be the stronghold of Taliban chief Baitullah Mehsud whose killing or arrest will mean a lot for the fight against extremists.... There should be no let down in the military operation in the face of these bullying militants."

"Fighting Extremism," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (06/24)

"Highlighting the need to fight extremism the President was categorical enough in warning that the failure was not an option: not for us, not for the world.... Obviously, the outcome of this crucial war against an enemy that is insidious wishing to shape Pakistan's future in its image, would to a very large degree affect the West as well. Therefore, all the nations involved must join the forces engaged in eliminating this common enemy.... In the meanwhile, there have been reports that some countries like India are funding the Taliban movement. While New Delhi might be attempting to destabilize Pakistan, at the end of the day it is the security of the world that would be put into jeopardy. Keeping in view the stakes involved, the Obama Administration would have to muster up courage to contain Indian ambitions in this regard."

"Stop Begging Now," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (06/24)

"When President Asif Ali Zardari has realized [Washington Post article] that we have suffered more losses than America or NATO countries, what is the use of sticking with war on terrorism.... In this situation, is it not better that we toss American aid on America's face and tell it that peace cannot be established in the region unless it withdrew its forces [from Afghanistan]."

"Foreign Agencies Activities: Raise The Issue At International Diplomatic Fora" an editorial in the Lahore-based independent Urdu daily "Din" (cir. 10,000) (06/24)

"The reality is now known to the international community that the Indian agency RAW and Indian commandos have been in the forefront of creating unrest in Swat. Moreover, even those Uzbeks are involved in creating turmoil here who received formal training from U.S. marines in CIA's secret training centers in Uzbekistan.... According to the latest reports, military officials and national security institutions have handed over incontrovertible evidence to the government of financial and weapons' support provided to Baloch separatists by Indian, Israeli and other foreign agencies."

"Nabbing Baitullah Alive," an op-ed by Ahmed Quraishi in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (06/24)

"The popular Pakistani understanding of the battle against Baitullah Mehsud is more American than Pakistani. This prevents us from accepting that this insurgency is wrapped in multiple layers of deceit. The entire prevailing narrative of the situation is exclusively American, tailored to suit Washington's worldview. It talks about a uniform threat of the Taliban and Al Qaeda with no distinction made between the Afghan Taliban and the new Pakistani version; the American narrative does not explain how or why the ranks of the Pakistani Taliban have been swelling steadily when the Afghan Taliban are not experiencing a similar surge; and why the American narrative suppresses any discussion of Pakistani grievances about an organized anti-Pakistan terror wave emanating from Afghanistan. The Pakistani counter-narrative is missing on the government level and is probably limited to some circles within the Pakistani strategic and intelligence communities. The impression that one gets is that the Pakistani government is essentially bartering silence for U.S. aid. And this is a dangerous bargain."

"The Dead Do Tell Tales," an op-ed by Zafar Hilaly in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (06/24)

"The army is fast acquiring a credibility problem with its claims of dead, injured and captured Taliban. At first there were mere mutterings, sotto voce suspicions, that not all is as claimed. These doubts are increasing; the chorus of suspicion is more voluble and before they acquire the dimensions of a scream the Army had better attend to it.... Pakistanis are a suspicious lot when it comes to evaluating official claims, perhaps because they tend to deceive even when it is easier to tell the truth; or because they have learnt from experience that 'official speak' is invariably wrong or comes with a spin; or because the claims are so fatuous as to defy credulity."

"U.S. Intent Getting Clearer," an op-ed by Shireen M. Mazari in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (06/24)

"For anyone who thought the U.S. was not targeting our nuclear assets, the screaming headlines from the Afghan-based Al Qaeda leadership's interview to Al Jazeera brought the issue to the forefront once again with claims that Al Qaeda would use our nuclear assets against the U.S. if they could. The absurdity of the statement notwithstanding, it can be explained only if seen as part of the campaign to legitimize a U.S./NATO takeover of our nuclear assets since our security prevents the U.S. from taking them out physically.... While our military has become embroiled in a 'war' that cannot be won by conventional military means, the U.S. continues to play dangerous games with Pakistan - and at multiple levels.... In fact just as the present government has gone the extra mile in ceding ground to the U.S. in Pakistan.... The fact is that unless the Pakistan military is weakened from within, the assets cannot be accessed at all. Hence the need of the U.S. to get the military bogged down in a conventional battle against unconventional foes in Swat and FATA.... Things are moving fast, and there is a crucial need for the Pakistani state to step back and look at the larger picture so that inclusive policies can be formulated to deal with the threat of extremism, militancy on a long term basis by denying them space in our society; and to protect our nation and its nuclear assets from U.S. designs."

"Obama On Pakistan," an op-ed by Mazhar Qayyum Khan in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000)

(06/24)

"The noises calling upon the U.S. to get hold of Pakistan's nuclear assets lest the Taliban should capture them have died down. In the first instance, it was simply ridiculous to make the assumption that militants could snatch the weapons from their guardians. If the U.S. analysts (who go for experts, ready to pronounce on everything on earth) did not know that these weapons were not lying in the open for anyone to pick up, they had better learn of facts before making judgments. The nuclear weapons are under a proper command and control authority.... It is difficult to deny that the Western nations have not been able to stomach the reality of a nuclear Pakistan, a Muslim country. However, under the circumstances Mr. Obama had no choice but to tell the Pakistani interviewers that they (atomic weapons) were 'safeguarded' and that 'it is Pakistan's nuclear arsenal.' That seemed to suggest that the Americans had no right to get hold of them. It should be clear that Pakistan would not, under any circumstances, provide access to the secret to anyone, not even the Americans."

"Expanding The Nuclear Arsenal," an op-ed by S.M. Hali in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (06/24)

"Pakistan's nuclear program has been under attack right from its inception; yet Pakistan faces a concerted campaign to instill fears regarding the security of its nuclear assets.... Pakistan has been on the defensive far too long, the West and India have been verbally assaulting Pakistan's nuclear program.... It is high time Pakistan stopped being apologetic. It has established a sound and operational nuclear security program; learning from the slip-ups of U.S. and other nuclear powers, a very mature, multi-dimensional and sturdy mechanism that covers all aspects of security.... As a sovereign country, it has the option of deciding for itself the number and quality of nuclear weapons it must have in its arsenal, directly proportional to the threat perception. No outsider has the right to declare 'Pakistan is stockpiling nukes over and above its genuine needs.'"

"Momentum For change In Iran," an op-ed by Mahir Ali in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (06/24)

"After last weekend's depressing events - at least 10 deaths, by official count, on Saturday, followed by nary a whimper of public protest on Sunday - it appeared that the repressive apparatus of the Islamic Republic of Iran had succeeded once more in trampling on the hopes of citizens disinclined to tolerate any further the totalitarian excesses of a theocratic state.... It seems not, primarily because any change for the better in Tehran would discredit their Manichean view of Iran.... Ahmadinejad has variously described the protesters as 'dust' and as 'terrorists,' and has relied on the notorious Basij militia to perpetrate violence against Iranians of all ages and both sexes. These are not the utterances and actions of someone confident of popular support.... Many of Mousavi's better known supporters claim that he is a changed man and the ideal candidate of these times."

(All circulation figures are based on estimation)
Patterson